Belgeo
Revue belge de géographie

1-2 | 2001
Electoral geography

Whatever happened to Italy's "red peasant"?: Geographic reflections upon *la zona rossa*

Réflexions géographiques sur la zona rossa *et son électorat paysan*

Michael Shin

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/15365
DOI: 10.4000/belgeo.15365
ISSN: 2294-9135

Publisher:
National Committee of Geography of Belgium, Société Royale Belge de Géographie

Printed version
Date of publication: 30 June 2001
Number of pages: 93-104
ISSN: 1377-2368

Electronic reference
Michael Shin, « Whatever happened to Italy's "red peasant"?: Geographic reflections upon *la zona rossa* », *Belgeo* [Online], 1-2 | 2001, Online since 30 November 2001, connection on 20 April 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/15365 ; DOI : 10.4000/belgeo.15365

Whatever happened to Italy's "red peasant"?: Geographic reflections upon la zona rossa

Réflexions géographiques sur la zona rossa *et son électorat paysan*

Michael Shin

This research was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF-SBR 9627917). I wish to thank Mr. Chris Hanson of the Department of Geography and Regional Studies at the University of Miami for his cartographic services. I also wish to thank Mr. G. Bertolucci for his interview (Lucca, 1997).

1 Party politics in Italy is renowned for its regional character. Many areas and places throughout this peninsular democracy provide electoral security and political identities for Italian parties and voters alike. One of the most recognized electoral regions of Italy is referred to as *la zona rossa*, or "the red zone". Comprised of the administrative regions of Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Umbria and Marche (Fig. 1), the naming of this area stems from the historically high levels of support that the parties of the Italian left, and in particular the Italian Communist Party (PCI), enjoyed after the second World War. In each national election since 1946, support for the parties of the Italian left has been at least ten percent higher than the national average within these four administrative regions that constitute *la zona rossa*, thus affirming that this area of Italy is appropriately named.

2 Explanations of this particular electoral pattern are often based upon long standing socio-historical traditions and territorial political subcultures. This latter term stems from Almond's (1956) notion of political culture, which can be characterized as the political attachments and orientations that are shared by groups and subgroups of a polity. In light of the recent changes that occurred within Italian party politics, and in particular the transformation of the Italian left itself, a reassessment of the electoral geography of *la zona rossa* may be in order. After reviewing the origins of leftist tendencies in north-central Italy, the contemporary patterns of support for the new Italian left, and in

particular, the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and Refounded Communists (RC) are presented within *la zona rossa*.

Figure 1. *La zona rossa* – the red zone.

Of peasants and places

3 More than thirty years ago, Mattei Dogan (1967) coined the term "'red' peasant" to describe the large segment of the Italian agricultural electorate that supported the Italian Communist and Socialist parties. The rural areas of Toscana and Emilia-Romagna were also identified to be "among the reddest of all western Europe" (1967, p. 146), and the probable home to many of these red peasants. The primary explanations given for the leftist tendencies found in these regions include the enduring legacies of sharecropping, the long-standing anticlerical sentiment of tenant farmers and farm laborers and the role that the communists played during the resistance to Fascism during the second half of the second World War.

4 According to Dogan (1967, p. 148), the traditions that spawned this communist territorial subculture were "too deeply rooted to undergo any radical change in the near future", but they provide a good starting point from which this examination of contemporary voting patterns found within *la zona rossa* can begin.

5 Territorial subcultures are noted by Trigilia (1986, pp. 49-50) for their "elevated degree of consensus for a specified political force and [for] an elevated capacity to aggregate and mediate diverse interests". Two of the most widely acknowledged historical political subcultures of Italy are the Catholic located in the northeast of the peninsula and the communist subculture in the center. The ability of the populations in these areas to mediate effectively interests and to reach consensus stems, in part, from the cooperative social networks and high levels of social capital found in each respective area, though the Catholic subculture has been seriously challenged by secularization and by the disappearance of the once-dominant Christian Democrats in 1993. Putnam's (1993)

examinations of civic behavior in Italy support this claim, as the social fabric in these two areas indeed stands out in terms of institutional performance and economic development, at least at the regional level. Certain historical circumstances that predate Italian statehood itself in 1870, in addition to later socio-economic developments, illuminate the particularities of society in the center of Italy which have since contributed to the emergence of the communist political subculture that is believed to be manifest as *la zona rossa*.

6 Throughout the nineteenth century, *mezzadria*, or sharecropping was the dominant mode of agricultural production for much of the rural population in central Italy, especially in Toscana. Though the preservation of the quasi-medieval, owner-tenant relations by the ruling elite in these rural areas shielded peasants from the vicissitudes of modernization and imported grain, another effect was that many of these places became more inward looking (Trigilia, 1986). The defense of the local from adverse market effects and the newly formed state arguably reinforced territorial identities, the sense of community and the familial networks that were already vital to the sharecropping enterprise (Ginsborg, 1990; Smith, 1959; Marcy, 1997). Ginsborg (1990, pp. 28-29) describes that, "Sharecropping families had in fact developed a rich network of exchanges and mutual aid; typical of these was the aiutarella, the exchange of labor between families at crucial moments in the agricultural calendar, such as at threshing time". Such practices, and collective farming in general, consolidated the overall sense of community between sharecroppers, and probably exacerbated tensions between owner and tenant. With the aristocracy unwilling to jeopardize the land tenure arrangement and to stop the exploitation of farm labor, agriculture in central Italy continued to operate in the early twentieth century much as it did in the middle of the nineteenth century.

7 In other areas of central Italy, and particularly in Emilia-Romagna, landless farm labor was much more predominant than sharecropping arrangements, and the overall class structure was more diverse than in Toscana. Combined with the influence of a proximate urban-industrial center, namely Bologna, the socialist movement emerged earlier in this region than in more peripheral areas due to the organization and influence of labor movements in the late 1800s. Nevertheless, the nature of social relations, poor working conditions, and the suspicions associated with statehood and modernization would make much of central Italy fertile ground for leftist movements.

8 One does not have to look far to observe the various influences of European socialism at the turn of the twentieth century upon the social, political and economic landscapes of Italy. With labor tensions manifest and underscored by strikes in both the industrial and agricultural sectors, the socialist movement diffused from urban centers into the rural countryside (Clark, 1984). It was during this period, in both the urban and rural areas of north-central Italy, that labor unions, federations of day laborers, cooperatives and Chambers of Labor proliferated. Focal points for such organizations included increasing wages, organizing strikes and opposing capitalistic ownership, while at the same time "challenging the Church's monopoly of ritual fervour" (Clark, 1984, p. 42). Though anticlericalism in central Italy dates back to the eighteenth century when the Church owned many large landed estates, such sentiments were not effectively channeled or organized until the socialist movement emerged. In addition to being anticlerical, a vast number of these socialist organizations were supported and financed by the comuni, or municipalities, in which they operated, thus establishing a critical link between organized labor and local political administration (Trigilia, 1986). The marriage between political

ideology and political organization in the center of Italy can be viewed as an artifact of the social fabric where associative and cooperative social networks flourished, and permeated many aspects of society. The rise of red communes, and likewise the red peasant, would later facilitate the establishment of the communist subculture as a pillar of the post-second World War party system in Italy.

9 Arguably the most important period of time with respect to the development of central Italy's communist subculture begins with Fascism and ends with the Resistance after 1943. Fascist brigades not only sought to isolate the labor movements that were prevalent in the 1920s, but they brutally oppressed and attempted to destroy Italian socialism and communism (Smith, 1982). The assassinations and public beatings of left-wing activists during Italian fascism forced the Italian left underground where widespread leftist sympathy helped to fortify and expand pre-existing socio-political networks. Of particular relevance to inhabitants in north-central Italy was the fascist regime's reinstatement of the sharecropping mode of agricultural production, which effectively turned the clock back to the turn of the century for those working the land (Baccetti, 1987).

10 After years of hiding and organizing underground, the last days of the war afforded the communists the opportunity to re-emerge upon the socio-political landscape. With the slow advance of Allied forces from the south of the peninsula, and the Nazi-Fascisti's defensive position above Florence, central Italy became the battleground for the Resistance (Ginsborg, 1990; Trigilia, 1986). As masses of refugees fled cities and towns destroyed during the German retreat, and as thousands of escaped prisoners of war sought protection in the countryside, the networks that supported the communists during Fascism, and in particular those involving sharecroppers, were actively and effectively put to use during the Resistance (Caciagli, 1988; Baccetti, 1987). Thus, during the Fascist era, and particularly at the end of the war, the communists "became the primary point of reference with regard to the defense of local society from the menaces and tensions of the war and German occupation" (Trigilia, 1986, p. 145).

11 Immediately after the war, Italy underwent a vast series of economic and social changes. The growth of industry and manufacturing was accompanied with massive waves of migration that had not been witnessed since the turn of the century. Such changes and movements associated with the reconstruction of the post-War Italian economy were not, however, distributed evenly across the Italian peninsula. Major industry was concentrated in the northwest of the country, while the south was plagued by unemployment, underdevelopment and the emigration of its most capable workers. North-central Italy was in many respects the zone of transition between the industrial, modern north and the "backwards" south (Banfield, 1958).

12 Table 1 documents clearly the shift away from the land to industry that was characteristic of much of Italy during the decades following the war, and which is still visible over the last two decades, with particular emphasis placed upon the administrative regions of *la zona rossa*.

Table 1. Active population per sector of economic activity (percentages).

	1951			1961			1971			1983			1995		
	Agr.	Ind.	Ter.	Agr.	Ind.	Ter.	Agr.	Ind.	Ter.	Agr.	Ind.	Ter.	Agr.	Ind.	Ter.
Emilia-R.	51.9	25.2	22.9	33.9	36.6	29.5	20.0	42.5	37.5	13.4	38.1	48.5	9.2	41.7	49.1
Toscana	39.6	34.0	26.4	24.1	44.0	31.9	11.5	48.4	40.1	7.4	41.8	50.8	4.7	41.1	54.2
Umbria	56.3	25.3	18.4	40.7	34.1	25.2	20.7	42.9	36.4	11.7	37.0	51.3	7.3	39.3	53.4
Marche	60.2	21.8	18.0	45.6	30.4	24.0	25.3	40.8	33.9	14.6	41.2	44.3	7.9	41.4	50.7
Italia	42.2	32.1	25.7	29.0	40.4	30.6	17.2	44.3	38.5	12.3	35.5	51.9	7.4	38.2	54.4

AGR.: AGRICULTURE; IND.: INDUSTRY; TER.: TERTIARY

Source: ISTAT

13 Unlike the south of the peninsula, the shift from agriculture to industry in *la zona rossa* was not necessarily accompanied by the mass movement of Italians. Baccetti (1987, p. 23) reveals that though many "red peasants", were leaving the land in favor of manufacturing jobs, much of the population in many places throughout Toscana moved only "a few kilometers, a few hundred meters, and often not at all", and other areas of north-central Italy actually experienced a net influx of migrants (Ginsborg, 1990, p. 233). Beginning with the Italian "economic miracle" of the late 1950s, much of the Italian countryside witnessed the emergence of light industry, artisan studios and small enterprise where agriculture – and in particular where sharecropping – was once dominant. Specializing in goods such as textiles, leather and furniture, the small firms of north-central Italy became famous in the 1970s and 1980s for their economic success. As agricultural laborers "moved" into light industry and small enterprise after the war, the family ties, collaboration and leftist political proclivities established during sharecropping periods were also carried over into their new livelihoods.

14 Perhaps the most visible forms of collaboration in Italy, and in particular throughout north-central Italy, are the cooperatives and consortia. These institutions, characterized by a blend of competition and cooperation, are formed by groups of farmers or small businesses in order to increase efficiency and profits. For example, agricultural cooperatives share equipment, pool harvests and market wine and olive oil under a single name. This permits the small-scale farmer to compete with larger vineyards and farms, as well as with other cooperatives. For the small firm, located in cities and in the countryside, consortia are often formed to purchase large quantities of goods at lower prices, to obtain and guarantee credit (see Brusco and Righi, 1989) and to provide a variety of small business services ranging from bookkeeping to promotion (Brusco, 1995). Such institutions not only promote economies of scale, but the social capital derived from and reproduced through such collaborative efforts may foster the development and maintenance of collective political identities and orientations. Furthermore, in cities such as Bologna, the Italian Communist Party successfully reassured and convinced small shopkeepers, artisans and a large portion of the urban middle class that it posed no threat to small business interests (Ginsborg, 1990). This blend of associative business practices and a favorable political-economic environment secured the support of the urban middle classes for the PCI, which ultimately proved to be a significant victory for the Italian left during the post-War era because it helped to solidify the PCI's position in local and regional government.

15 Over the course of the post-war era, social networks rooted in sharecropping, communal infrastructures and a wealth of socio-economic services evolved in both urban and rural areas of north-central Italy (Trigilia, 1986; Baccetti, 1987; Caciagli, 1988; Putnam, 1993). This particular brand of social capital – in combination with a leftist political bias – served to distinguish light industry and small enterprise in north-central Italy from that in other areas of the peninsula, and have also made it among the most modern and economically developed regions within Europe (Goodman, 1989; Leonardi and Nanetti, 1994). The economic success of *la zona rossa*, however, cannot entirely be attributed to local circumstances and local institutions. Global shifts in production and demand throughout the Italian, European and world economies over the last three decades created conditions from which the small firms and enterprises in *la zona rossa* have benefited. Returning to the notion of the communist territorial political subculture, the relatively recent transformation of party politics in Italy has changed dramatically the menu of political choice in this modern European democracy.

16 How this transformation has altered the electoral geography of *la zona rossa* is not entirely clear, and the remainder of this article attempts to shed light upon the contemporary pattern of support for the Italian left in this area.

Redefining *la zona rossa*

17 Over the course of the post-war era, the political expression of the communist territorial subculture was often described as the voto di appartenenza, or the "vote of belonging".

18 According to Parisi and Pasquino (1979, p. 16), this type of vote is considered a ritual which reconfirms membership within a group, and is "the sum of social embeddedness and party identification". The blend of history, social institutions and social capital that is unique to north-central Italy arguably channeled many votes towards the Italian Communist Party, and subsequently helped to shape the PCI's territorial bastion of support, *la zona rossa*. Less political choice than social identification, the vote of belonging is frequently associated with continuity at the polls, the kind which the PCI enjoyed in *la zona rossa* up to its demise in 1991. Table 2 illustrates such continuity of support for the PCI in *la zona rossa*, which was consistently higher than the national averages of support.

19 The increase in PCI support over the course of the late 1960s. and 1970s was not necessarily coupled with an expansion of *the voto di appartenenza*. Parisi and Pasquino (1979, p. 21) explain that as modernization and secularization spread throughout all aspects of Italian life, the ties of *appartenenza* throughout the communist subculture became more flexible, if not less relevant. Consequently, the success of the PCI at the polls during this period is attributed more to the party appealing to new segments of the electorate throughout Italy (e.g., young voters, Catholic workers) than to the diffusion of *appartenenza*. The success of the PCI at the national-level would be short-lived, however, as party membership and electoral support declined throughout the 1980s.

Table 2. Vote shares of the Italian left in *la zona rossa* and for Italy.

	1946	1953	1958	1963	1968	1972	1976	1979	1983	1987	1992	1994	1996
Zona rossa													
-PCI	32.1	32.8	33.0	37.7	40.3	41.0	46.4	44.8	45.0	41.9	-	-	-
-PDS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24.7	33.7	33.1
-RC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.8	8.6	10.9
Italy	18.9	22.6	22.7	25.3	26.9	27.1	34.4	30.4	29.9	26.6	21.7*	26.4*	29.7*

*** SUM OF NATIONAL AVERAGES FOR PDS AND RC.**

20 Dissatisfied with its declining membership, decreasing electoral support and its oppositional role in parliament, the leadership of the PCI decided to dissolve and reformulate the party in late-1989 (Ignazi, 1992; Hellman, 1992; McCarthy, 1995; Weinberg, 1995). The decision to reconfigure the PCI coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and ultimately forced the Italian left to re-evaluate its position in relation to the on-going changes to the European left and the Soviet Union. After a series of discussions, debates and party congresses, many of which were charged with emotion, two new political parties emerged upon on the left-side of the Italian political landscape in 1991 (Baccetti, 1991; Baccetti and Caciagli, 1992; Kertzer, 1991). The largest contingent of former-PCI members reconfigured themselves as the moderately-leftist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), while a smaller, more radical group, splintered itself off and formed the Refounded Communists (RC). Though these changes to the Italian left were notable in their own right, the Mani Pulite and Tangetopoli investigations revealed the extent and magnitude of decades of government corruption, which in turn fueled a popular revolt against the status quo. This combination of events marked the beginning of the "transformation" of Italian politics, which resulted in the disappearance of several parties that were once fixtures of post-war Italian democracy (e.g., the Italian Socialist Party, the Christian Democrats), and which opened the doors for new parties (e.g., the Northern League, Forza Italia!) to enter the political arena in the early 1990s.

21 The effects of the reconfiguration of the PCI are still being played out, though it appears that the new left in Italy has recuperated fairly well from its transition of the early 1990s. when vote shares for the PDS and RC are aggregated at the national level (Table 2). This "recovery" of the Italian left at the national level, however, disguises the emergence of an altered, if not new, electoral geography – or geographies – of *la zona rossa*.

22 The demands of the electorate within *la zona rossa* did not radically shift in the late-1980s and early 1990s when the PCI underwent its self-transformation, but the supply of political offerings was dramatically altered. Specifically, the reconfiguration of the PCI into the social-democratic PDS and more radical, hard-line RC, effectively forced voters to articulate their political positions as either moderate or extremist, ceteris paribus. Though the split of the PCI has introduced another level of complexity and hardship to coalition building within parliament, it has also served to distinguish the political character of different areas within *la zona rossa*.

23 Figure 2 presents the electoral geography of *la zona rossa* in terms of support for the PDS in the 1996 Italian national elections. The geographic units of analysis are the 980 Italian comuni, or municipalities, in the administrative regions of Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Umbria and Marche. Vote shares for the PDS and RC are divided into quartiles in each

respective map, with higher values represented with darker shades of gray. The most striking features of the map in Figure 2 are the clusters of high PDS support (i.e., fourth quartile) around Bologna, Siena and to the south of Florence, areas in which light industry and small firms are prevalent (Leonardi and Nanetti, 1994), and two administrative regions identified for their wealth of social capital and high institutional performance (Putnam, 1993). Relatively high levels of support for the PDS can also be found in the western half of Umbria and the northern half of Marche, while lower support tends to be concentrated to the northwest and southeast border areas of *la zona rossa*.

Figure 2. Geographic distribution of PDS support, 1996.

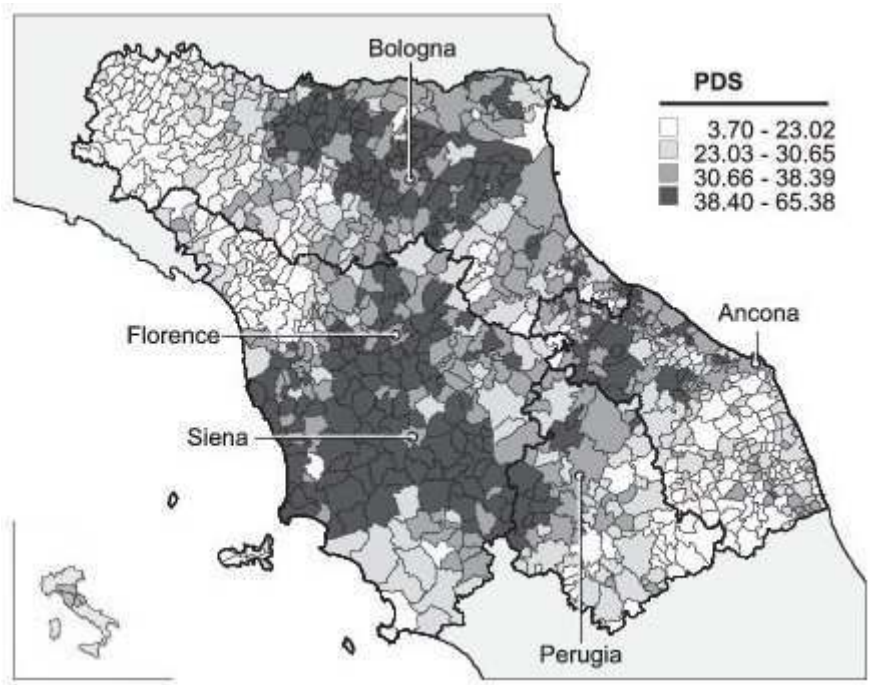
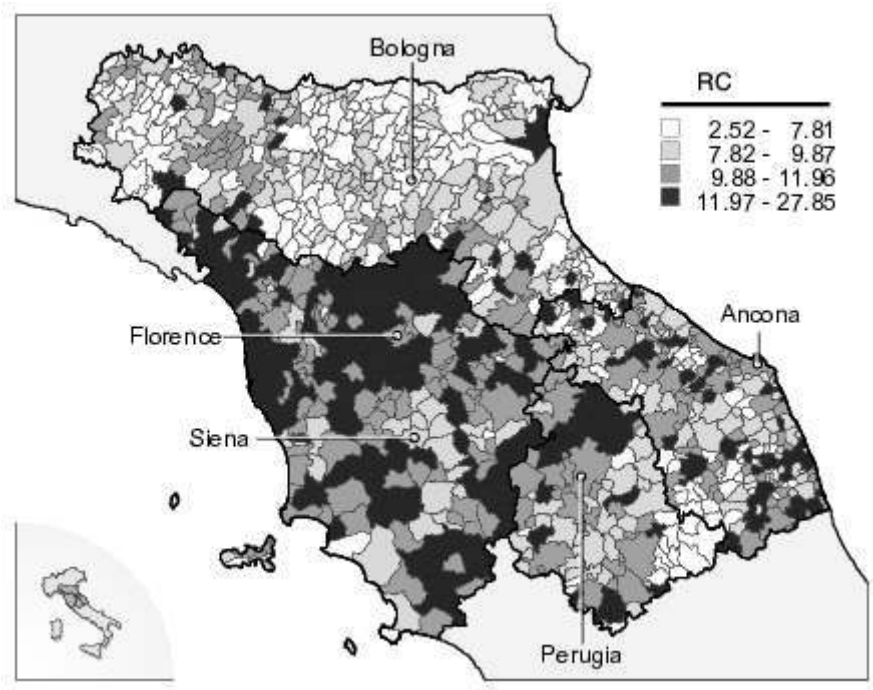


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of RC support, 1996.



24 RC performance is presented in Figure 3 and support for this party in *la zona rossa* is markedly different from that of the PDS. Most striking are the differences in RC support between the administrative regions of Emilia-Romagna and Toscana. Very little support for the RC (i.e., first quartile) exists in the former region, while higher levels of RC support throughout Toscana (i.e., third and fourth quartiles) suggest the presence of a more radical contingent of voters. The radical nature of Tuscan communism has been noted in previous studies, and is often attributed to the legacies of sharecropping (e.g., Dogan, 1967; Trigilia, 1986). RC support in Marche is not as high and is more dispersed than in Toscana, and a noticeable void of RC support exists in the southeast of Umbria.

25 The comparison of the two maps reveal three distinct electoral geographies within *la zona rossa*: first, around Bologna, PDS support is high, but RC support is low; second, in the northwest of Toscana, RC support is high, but PDS support is low; and third, in the center of Toscana and northwestern extents of Umbria, support for both the PDS and RC is relatively high and widespread. Though the communist territorial subculture provides the socio-historical foundations for understanding these electoral patterns, the combinations of support for the new Italian left that emerged recently warrant a re-examination of how political attitudes and behaviors are shaped, altered and reproduced (e.g., Ramella, 1994).

26 Though an in-depth account of each electoral pattern is beyond the scope of this analysis, general explanations can be made. Since the PDS is recognized to be the primary replacement for the PCI, high support for the PDS in and around Bologna is not entirely surprising. In some respects it can be considered a form of electoral continuity for the more moderate aspects of the Italian left, which contributed to the PCI's historic efficiency and efficacy in local, provincial and regional government in Bologna and its surrounding environs (e.g., Putnam, 1993; Ginsborg, 1990). As noted earlier, Tuscan communism is recognized to be more radical than that found around Bologna due to the

legacies of sharecropping and the Resistance, which in turn may account for the mixture of moderate to high support for both the PDS and RC in this area. In northwest Toscana, the PCI historically received support from the large segment of the population employed in the mining, industrial shipbuilding and related industries. In the early 1990s, however, the introduction of new technologies that automate and mechanize the fabrication of stone and marble resulted in a series of lay offs and the closing of several smaller firms (Internazionale Marmi e Macchine Carrara SpA 2000). The dissatisfaction resulting from job losses, and the hardships associated with local economic restructuring, are probably manifest as political support for the more radical RC in this area. Such explanations suggest that no single theory of political behavior may be applicable across this electoral region, and that *la zona rossa* itself may need to be redefined given the variations and combinations of support for the PDS and RC.

Final remarks

27 A variety of historical factors, such as the legacies of papal domination, the Resistance during the second half of the second World War, and the enduring influences of pre-fascist socialism, contributed to the spatial manifestation of leftist attitudes in *la zona rossa*. Note also that these socio-political circumstances helped to establish one of the most economically developed and dynamic regions in all of Europe. In light of the rise of new parties, new politicians and a diverse set of political-economic circumstances throughout Italian politics (e.g., globalization, European monetary union, regional economic prosperity, etc.), the future of *la zona rossa* as the electoral stronghold for the Italian left, or lefts (plural), remains unclear. The transformation of party politics in Italy continues to challenge the existence *la zona rossa* and the communist territorial subculture, as a faction of the RC recently splintered off to form the Italian Communists (PdCI), and as the PDS was renamed the Democrats of the Left (DS) in an effort to redefine itself as a "European" social-democratic party rather than a "post-communist" party (Massari and Parker, 1999). Though such changes appear to be more cosmetic than substantive, it remains to be seen whether or not they will be translated into even newer, if not more, electoral geographies within *la zona rossa*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AGNEW J. (1992), "Place and politics in post-war Italy: a cultural geography of local identity in the provinces of Lucca and Pistoia", *in* ANDERSON K. and GALE F. (eds.), *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, pp. 52-71.

ALMOND G. (1956), "Comparative Political Systems", *Journal of Politics 18*, pp. 391-409.

BACCETTI C. (1987), "Memoria storica e continuità elettorale: Una zona rossa nella Toscana rossa", *Italia contemporanea 167*, pp. 7-30.

BACCETTI C. (1991), "L'ultima svolta. Il XIX congresso straordinario del Pci in Toscana", *Polis V*, pp. 519-551.

BACCETTI C. and CACIAGLI M. (1992), "Dopo il Pci e Dopo l'Urss. Una subcultura rossa rivisitata", *Polis VI,* pp. 537-568.

BANFIELD E. (1958), *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, New York, The Free Press.

BRUSCO S. (1995), "Local productive systems and new industrial policy in Italy", *in* BAGNASCO A. and SABEL C. (eds.), In Small and Medium-Size Enterprises, London, Pinter, pp. 51-68.

BRUSCO S. and RIGHI e. (1989), "Local government, industrial policy and social consensus: the case of Modena (Italy)", *Economy and Society, 18*, pp. 405-424.

CACIAGLI M. (1987), "La tradizione non basta più. L'aspetto cruciale del cal elettorale del Pci in Toscana", *Regione Come* (giugno), pp. 21-22.

CACIAGLI M. (1988), "Approssimazione alle culture politiche locali. Problemi di analisi ed esperienze di ricerca", Il Politico 53, pp. 269-292.

CLARK M. (1984), Modern Italy, 1871-1982, London, Longman.

DOGAN M. (1967), "Political cleavages and social stratification in France and Italy", *in* LIPSET S.M. and ROKKAN S. (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, New York, The Free Press, pp. 129-195.

GINSBORG P. (1990), *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, London, Penguin.

GOODMAN E. (1989), "Introduction: the political economy of the small firm in Italy", *in* GOODMAN E. and BAMFORD J. (eds.), *Small Firms and Industrial Districts in Italy*, London, Routledge, pp. 1-30.

HELLMAN S. (1992), "The difficult birth of the Democratic Party of the Left", *in* HELLMAN S. and PASQUINO G. (eds.), *Italian Politics: a review, 7*, London, Pinter, pp. 68-86.

IGNAZI P. (1992), *Dal Pci al Pds*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

INTERNAZIONALE MARMI E MACCHINE CARRARA SpA. (2000), *Stone Industry Census* (Available: http://www.immcarrara.com).

KERTZER D. (1991), "The 19th Congress of the PCI: the role of symbolism in the Communist Crisis", *in* LEONARDI R. and ANDERLINI F. (eds.), *Italian Politics: a review, 6*, London, Pinter, pp. 69-103.

LEONARD R. and NANETTI R. (1994), *Regional Development in a Modern European Economy: The Case of Tuscany*, London, Pinter Publishers.

MARCY P. (1997), "Rethinking a stereotype: territorial differences and family models in the modernization of Italy", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies, 2*, pp.188-214.

MASSARI O. and PARKER S. (1999), "Le due sinistre tra rotture e ricomposizioni", *in* HINE D. and VASSALLO S. (eds.), *Politica in Italia*, Edizione 99, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 61-78.

McCARTHY P. (1995), *The Crisis of the Italian State: From the Origins of the Cold War to the Fall of Berlusconi & Beyond*, London, MacMillan.

PARISI A. and PASQUINO G. (1979), "Changes in Italian Electoral Behavior: The Relationships between Parties and Voters", *West European Politics* 2/3, pp. 6-30.

PUTNAM R. (1993), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

RAMELLA F. (1994), "L'area rossa", *in* DIAMANTI I. and MANNHEIMER R. (eds.), *Milano a Roma*, Roma, Donzelli Editore, pp. 99-108.

SMITH D.M. (1959), *Italy: A Modern History*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

SMITH D.M. (1982), *Mussolini: A Biography*, New York, Vintage.

TRIGILIA C. (1986), *Grandi Partiti e Piccole Imprese: Comunisti e democristiani nelle regioni a economia diffua*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

WEINBERG L. (1995), *The Transformation of Italian Communism*, New Brunswick, Transactions Publishers.

ABSTRACTS

The adjacent Italian administrative regions of Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Umbria and Marche constitute what is frequently referred to as *la zona rossa*, or "the red zone". This naming of the north-central area of the Italian peninsula stems from the historically high levels of support that the Italian Communist Party (PCI) enjoyed for much of the post-World War two period. Notwithstanding the dissolution of the PCI, and the subsequent reconfigurations of the Italian left that took place throughout the 1990s, voters within *la zona rossa* still exhibit leftist tendencies. This article examines the socio-historical roots of *la zona rossa* and presents the contemporary electoral geography of this area.

Les régions administratives italiennes d'Emilie-Romagne, Toscane, Ombrie et des Marches constituent ce que l'on appelle fréquemment *la zona rossa*, ou "zone rouge". Cette dénomination du centre-nord de la péninsule italienne provient du soutien historique considérable dont a bénéficié le Parti Communiste Italien (PCI) durant une bonne partie de l'après-guerre. Malgré la dissolution du PCI et les reconfigurations de la gauche italienne qui s'en sont suivies au cours des années 90, le vote de gauche y prédomine encore aujourd'hui. Cet article analyse les racines socio-historiques de *la zona rossa* et en présente la géographie électorale actuelle.

INDEX

Mots-clés: la zona rossa, Parti Communiste Italien (PCI), Parti Démocratique de la Gauche (PDS), Refondation Communiste (RC)
Keywords: Italian Communist Party (PCI), Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), Refounded Communists (RC)

AUTHOR

MICHAEL SHIN

Department of Geography, University of California, USA, shinm@geog.ucla.edu